AN UNINTENTIONAL PATRIOT

HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

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"'Drop your guns!'"

An Unintentional Patriot

BY

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PHILADELPHIA

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By The Same Author

MOLLY THE DRUMMER BOY
THEN MARCHED THE BRAVE
WHEN THE BRITISH CAME

FIFTY CENTS EACH

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An Unintentional Patriot

CHAPTER I

AND THERE WAS TROUBLE BREWING

"LA! Jane, and how am I to finish copying this recipe if you keep up that clatter in my ears? My mother has set the day's stint: the nineteenth Psalm—that I have learned; and my sampler is yet to complete. There it lies on the stand, Jane, and if you love me you will cease your idle chatter and turn your attention to that."

Pretty Betty Morton, seated by the quaint three-cornered desk in the long, low room, poised a quill pen in air and looked pleadingly at her friend.

But Mary Jane Barton, balanced on the win-

dow ledge, had big affairs in mind, and it was no easy matter for her at any time to keep her tongue in check.

"Betty!" she ran on unheedingly, "such news!"

"Jane, I must finish this. The recipe is one my mother brought from her New England home. 'T is in a fair way to be forgotten unless I make a clear copy of it, for the original is in shreds. It is four of the clock, and not an hour have I had to myself since early sunup! Cease, Jane, and when I am through then will I listen to your great news with an eager ear."

"But think of it happening in our home! Just think of it! Oh, Bet, drop the recipe! Much better had all such messes be forgotten. Take the chastisement your mother will mete out to you; my news is worth it all. But come, I beseech you, or I shall burst!"

Scratch! scratch! went the quill pen, and Betty's fair head bent lower. The girl had great determination under her soft nature.

"Drat the writing!" laughed Jane, who understood perfectly how far she could go with

"'How am I to finish copying this recipe?'"

her friend. "When such doings are afoot, 't is sheer folly to keep your nose to any common task."

"I tremble for your future, Jane Barton. I tell you again my task I will finish though you burst in the keeping of your secret, and I burst in my longing to hear it!"

Jane laughed merrily.

"Tremble not for me, Bet," she said, tossing her head high; "if I mistake not, I have been singled out by Providence and circumstances for great doings. A Puritan at heart you are my sweet Betty for all the nonsense your Royalist father has crushed into you—"

"Jane!" The tender face over the yellow sheet of paper flushed indignantly even while the resolute hand dipped the quill again into the ink-horn. If Jane could not be hushed, at least Betty Norton could perform her task.

Scratch! scratch! went the pen over the rough paper while the young scribe spelled here and there a word aloud. Then she read back a few lines, sighed heavily and bit her little pink tongue unmercifully.

Seeing her comrade set upon her duty in

this dogged fashion, Jane Barton laid hold upon the sampler and fell to work. But her unruly tongue would once and awhile break silence.

"And Marion, of all men! Ah, there is a man for you!" Betty's face grew quite red with suppressed excitement. "Were I a lad—" Jane ran on.

"Think shame to yourself, Jane Barton. Lad indeed! Jane, dear, how do you spell treacle? There is a hole quite through the paper here."

"Tre-a-cle," Jane replied slowly.

"La! 't is a mercy I asked you. I had it treak-al. 'T is ever the same—I cannot spell. Half the words are wrong I know. Figuring and spelling drive me mad. My poor head was never made for such weighty matters. The Bible tells us there is a differing in talents. Now in kitchen, buttery, or even in company, I cut not an ill figure; but where learning is concerned I am a sad failure." Poor Betty wiped a little round tear from her soft cheek.

"My mother will thimble me well for this I know!" she sighed gently. "My pate is sore yet where but yesterday she did rap me well for figuring my column wrong. As if in such fashion one could make a scholar! Now, Jane, listen; how does this sound?"

Jane stitched away on the sampler, a mischievous light in her brown eyes that would have set a wiser one than Betty on her guard.

"Venice Treacle," Betty read, holding her paper at arm's length. "Recipe for Venice Treacle. Twelve vipers in white wine."

"Ugh!" shuddered Jane.

"Licorice, red rose leaves, juice of rough sloes— Jane, how do you spell juice?"

"J-u-i-c-e."

Betty scratched something from her paper.

"I had it g-u-c-e," she sighed humbly. "I thought it looked queer, but then half the words I see look odd when one recalls how they sound."

Jane covered her face with the sampler and

swayed to and fro in her mirth. "Go on!" she pleaded, "the mess, flavored by your innocence, is vastly diverting. I declare I am enjoying myself hugely."

"And honey triple the weight of all," read Betty. "What think you of it, Jane? 'T is warranted to cure all ills—especially fits!"

"La! the hearing of the loathsome mess has cured my intention of having a fit," laughed Jane, growing serious again. "'T is the work of the Evil One himself to concoct such fearful doses for poor suffering humans."

"Thank you!" Betty tossed her fair curls, and shook sand upon the copy.

"La! Bet, you 're but the copyist of one eviller than you. Now listen to my production!" She waved the sampler, cleared her throat, and in a deep voice began:

"This is my sampler,
There you see—"

Up to that point Betty had worked daintily and well; Jane had added:

"What a little devil
Is Janie B—."

"Oh! oh!" half sobbed Betty; "you wicked girl. Indeed, Jane, I believe you are foreordained for eternal banishment. It should read:

"What care my mother
Took of me!"

The witch smile fled from Jane's face when she saw her friend's real distress.

" 'T was but a silly jest," she said; "dry your eyes, dear Betty. The God who made me gave me nimble fingers wherewith to combat an impish impulse. See! already the words are gone." She had picked out the threads. "Now some yarn, dear, not too long let the pieces be, they are the undoing of the hurried. And knot the ends, Bet; 't was remembering

the knot that made the tailor rich. Now, say over the drivel that is to be handed down to posterity, and the thing is done!"

The light head and the dark bent closely over the work—Betty repeating the proper words; Jane working rapidly. Soon the wrong was righted.

"La! but you are a quick one!" Betty exclaimed; "my father said but yester e'en had you been a lad the king would have had a gallant fighter."

"The king!" Jane opened her brave eyes wide. "I 'll have you all know that I 'm for Marion and the Continentals!"

"Hist, Jane!"

"Nay, I 'll not hist! I 'm for open ways. News drifts but slowly here, but I 've heard things."

"Come, Jane, to the magnolia clump by the stream. If you are bent upon destroying yourself, then no one but me shall hear you."

Over the sunlit lawn the two girls ran, and

all breathless they sank down in the cool shadow of the fragrant bushes.

"Now," whispered Betty, "for your news."

Jane, laughing, drew close and whispered into the little pink ear: "Marion bided in our house last night!"

"Oh!" groaned Betty, edging away and turning pale; "that dangerous man!"

"Dangerous? Well, I should think so!" panted Jane. "I reckon his Majesty will soon think so. You should have heard him talk. I will serve him as and where I can! I was on the side of the colonies before, because I do love justice; but now— Why, Betty, I 'd dare shake my fist in the king's face!"

She suited her words with an action and waved a little brown hand so close to Betty's frightened face that that young Royalist shivered.

"Jane!" she cried indignantly, "how dare you!"

"Aye, you may scoff if you will, but I am

filled with fury. A ship has come from Boston town, with news of an awful battle at Lexington—"

"That will touch my mother!" Betty broke

"That young Royalist shivered"

in thoughtfully. "Lexington was her birthplace, and some of her kin still dwell there; but—but mother is loyal to the king!" The sweet eyes flashed as if defying doubt on that point.

"Oh, Jane!" she went on more quietly, "voice not your rebel thoughts. Should my father hear, he would forbid my friendship for you; and—and Jane, how could I live without you?" She pressed closer to the stronger girl, and Jane caressed her absentmindedly.

"Tell no one but me," Betty continued. "Go on, dear Jane, I am dying to know more about that—that terrible Marion. He is worse even than Washington, I do believe!"

"Impossible!" laughed Jane; "but he follows close on the heels of the great Washington. Aye, but there is a pair for the king to reckon with! Washington in the north and Marion in the south! Why, Betty, England is tottering!"

Against such treason Betty, the Royalist, dared not come in too close contact, so again she moved away but whispered as she did so:

"Pray go on to the point!"

"Well, last night, as mother, the boys, and I were at the evening meal," Jane's eyes were

dreamy as she re-lived the most exciting hour of her life, "there came a knock at the door." She made the motion and Betty fancied she heard the sharp rap.

"Careful!" she cautioned, looking around wide-eyed and pale. But Jane was deaf to her low voice. "No polite tap, let me tell you," she said, "but a loud thump that did scare me so that I bit my tongue cruelly. 'Come in!' said mother, and in strode a man not over big, but when you caught his eye, there was that that shone forth which made you know he was a kind of giant.

" 'Have you enough to share with a hungry stranger?' he said, flinging his hat upon the settle.

" 'Little or much, there is always enough for that,' mother answered. Then Philip put a chair to the table, and mother bustled about setting forth a fresh loaf and more honey and milk. I looked at John, for from first to last he had made no move.

"The stranger began to eat, and as heaven hears me, I never saw such an appetite! Mother cut slice after slice and they disappeared like food in a dream. And the milk! Well, it just went!"

"Unmannerly wretch!" sniffed Betty; "such doings bespeak his nature true."

"He was a poor starved soul!" Jane whispered, her shining eyes dimming. "For two days he had been galloping over the country for the good of the cause, eating crusts and what he could pick up in the woods and fields. But when at last he had finished he was not long in coming to the point. Not only for food had he sought our home, he was urging men to join his regiment. He has thirty already promised; they are to meet at the tavern down by the river, and—and do you not see, Betty, he wanted to know what mother would give to the cause."

"She—she has nothing to give!" panted Betty, leaning forward in her eagerness. "No

matter how her heart goes, she has nothing to give against her king. She is poor, she—"

"Bah!" Jane flung her strong, young arms out impatiently. "Nothing! Why, she has everything. There are Phil and John—not to mention me—and we can starve if need arise in order to feed them who can serve better."

"Jane!" Betty was all a-quiver. "Philip and John are but boys! Surely the rebels must be hard pressed if they set children to fighting. Have they come to such straits? Urging boys to leave home and taking the food from the mouths of poor women and girls?"

Something now in Betty's voice attracted Jane. It was an undeniable sneer. Jane turned sharply.

"I would Phil and John could hear you call them children," she said slowly.

"Sixteen and seventeen bespeak no infancy age. And where a principle calls for defenders, one is never too young to respond. Oh! you should have seen my brothers as they lis-

tened to Marion. He spoke of the duty we owed the colonies. He reminded us of how we were once glad to leave England's oppression and come to this new land. And now when oppression has followed us, and true souls call for justice, who is willing to play false? Both boys were on their feet. Mother clasped her hands close, and her dear face shone, though I saw her lips tremble. I went over and stood beside her, and I think she understood, for she whispered: 'We can do the woman's part, lass, you and I!' 'Who will follow Francis Marion, and who the king's men?' said the stranger. And then Phil and John, in their excitement, cried: 'I and I!'"

By this time Betty was on her feet, for Jane had led up to the scene with tragic force.

"I cannot understand," gasped Betty; "are they both going to follow the—king's men?"

"No!" Jane's eyes were flashing.

"Are—are they both for Marion?" Betty's voice was a hoarse whisper.

"Nay. One is for the king's unrighteous cause, and one for the cause of freedom," Jane replied.

"Which is for which?" Betty barely breathed the words.

"Which think you, Bet?" Jane prolonged the agony.

"I—I—how can I know?"

"Why, Phil, my own brave Phil, is to follow the glorious Marion; and John, poor John, has chosen the king!"

Betty suddenly dropped on her knees and stared helplessly. She ignored the reference to "poor John;" one thought alone held her.

"Phil a rebel!" she moaned.

"No, a patriot!" smiled Jane, and her shining eyes looked beyond the summer flowers.

"A rebel!" Betty moaned unheedingly. "Phil, to be so vile a thing!"

Jane shook her roughly.

"You know not what you say," she quivered; "Phil is for the new country, our coun-

try, and we, his playmates and friends, must help him. Why, Betty, you should have seen his face when he asked, 'Where can I find Marion?'

" 'Here!' said the stranger, and then mother and I clung together and cried for very pride and joy. Phil was clinging to the General's hand, and then John spoke:

" 'I cannot bide longer here,' he whispered more to mother than to anyone else. 'God help us all! I must go where my heart calls, mother, but I carry no tales!' This he said to Marion. Then out of the door he strode with mother following him with her sad eyes, yet never once calling him back."

Betty was sobbing, her fair head bent upon her knees, for she had dropped weakly among the flowers. "Oh! we were all so happy," she moaned, "so happy. Now we are miserable. Why could we not be loyal no matter what the king did? He would not have hurt us!"

"Shame!" cried Jane, then she relented. "Betty, you will yet be on our side."

"Never!" Betty was on her feet again. "'T is but a passing weakness. I have hoped that this uprising against the king would be put down ere it reached us to make a choice. My father has said it would not amount to much; but since—since this Marion has brought the trouble to our doors, and—and we boys and girls must choose, then Jane Barton there are others beside you and—and Philip! I 'll urge my brother Adrian to take sides for the king, and I—I am for his Majesty!"

"Betty!" Jane looked at the pale girl in wonder. "Betty—yet we may stay friends?"

For an instant Betty faltered; then, "At heart—yes—Jane; but not even you shall stand between me and a chance to serve King George. They do say that he is mad and knows not what he does—"

"But England is not mad!" Jane broke in wildly, "and they do best serve the mad king who live up to what he might be at his best!"

"I am for his Majesty, mad or sane!" Betty tossed her golden curls. "You may serve your freebooter, Jane Barton, but I keep better company."

"I shall remember, Betty Norton!" Jane's dark face grew grim. "I shall remember this day. And when the war is over—for it is going to be a war, mind you—you and I will take reckoning together, and balance our accounts. We understand each other."

"We do!"

One might have thought the fate of the colonies lay in those girlish hands, so fierce and earnest were they. But in those days feeling ran high and hearts were brave.

CHAPTER II

A WAR OF WITS

NOW while the king's men and the king's rebels were fighting all over the sunny south, the two young girls—Betty Norton and Jane Barton—were sharpening their wits and aiding their respective parties as best they could. They missed each other terribly; but they were proud and hot tempered, and the day that they had run, so lovingly, to the clump of magnolias to tell and hear the great news was the last day for many a month that they met with girlish tenderness. They both thought they had a mission; and when two girls of fifteen meet and their missions happen to differ it is more than likely that they will prove very unyielding and stern young persons.

"No," Jane often whispered to herself while working in the garden; "no, though I die yet will I sacrifice everything—even Betty's friendship—for the cause! Betty is a misguided girl, and stubborn past all belief." And pretty Betty, bending over her sampler, or maddening columns of figures, would whisper: "Nay, this I cannot forgive! To know that Jane is a rebel makes friendship for her impossible. Until she sees the error of her way I must harden my heart toward her. I believe she is doing this for pure spite. How can she believe it right to fight against one's king? Jane was always so set in her own conceit!" Then another tear would fall upon the task—or maybe a dozen, for Betty was sore distressed and lonely. And once she got "thimbled" well because she ruined a bit of silken embroidery by the vapory manner of her thought.

But the two girls had other troubles. They were mightily handicapped by their respective families.

With Philip following the dashing Marion, and John serving among the king's men, was not a faithful sister sadly beset?

Mrs. Barton, with a heavy heart, pointed out that, come what might, a woman's duty, quite as much as a man's, must go with the cause her heart and soul believed true. Betty was in no less of a quandary. Her father was a blustering man for the king; and Adrian, without any urging, had early donned the Royalist uniform and gone tooting away. But Mrs. Norton was of New England stock. Her early girlhood had taken root in the sturdy soil of Massachusetts, and she was a worthy product of that place and time. Still, she was loyal to the change that was brought about when, as a girl of sixteen, she married a young southerner, and went to the southern colonies to make her home.

She never forgot the east, or the kin that still dwelt there; but her duty lay near at hand. To love, honor and obey—especially

the last command—her big noisy husband. To love, command and train the little boy and girl who came later. To be a wise mistress of the slaves and the pretty home; all these things were sacred duties in the eyes of Mrs. Norton. But—oh! that perplexing but! How could she say she upheld the king's cause, when all her hidden nature rebelled? Never in all her gentle life before had duty and love waged battle. The pretty little mother saw her boy go forth, and her heart dared not wish him victory!

Day by day she listened to her husband rave and fume about the outrages of the southern rebels; and her secret soul gloried in their bravery and courage! Not even to Betty could the mother speak, for Betty was a Royalist, and besides Betty was struggling between her loyalty to the king and her hunger for Jane, and the girl was in no mood for doubtful observations in her own home. But Betty had her eye on her mother.

"Now I wonder," she often mused, "what mother is thinking about? She never expresses an opinion on either side." And once, when a postboy delivered a letter to Mrs. Norton, Betty noticed that the contents were not mentioned. Indeed, the father was never told of it at all.

"From whom is the letter, mother?" Betty had asked at last.

"From home," Mrs. Norton replied. She had always called the south "home" before, and Betty saw a tear in her mother's gray eyes.

In the meanwhile the red coats and the tattered continentals were frisking about the country. They were always on the run to reinforce or be reinforced.

Marion was upsetting the best laid plans of his Majesty the king, and frightening the soldiers half to death by his unexpected appearances. So it is plain to see that lesser folk had need to keep their wits about them.

Marion's spies were legion; and not the least among them were young girls and boys who were here, there, and everywhere, telling him, or his men, what they saw and heard; taking food to him and his hungry followers; running grave risks, and glorying in the danger.

While on the other hand the king's troops, after their success at Charleston, were arrogant and daring. Except for their awe of Marion—who was said to be possessed of the Evil One, and certainly acted so—they would have gone to greater lengths of impudence than they did. It was reported among the Royalist camps that Marion was known to have been in seven places at about the same hour! Such a fact as that was calculated to dampen even burning British courage. And the superstitious soldiery were held in check, much to the relief of many an American girl.

One afternoon Cudjo, a slave belonging to Mr. Norton, came to Betty as she sat on the

shady piazza working at her endless embroidery.

"Fo' de Lawd! Miss Betty," he began, "Ef I doan' 'bleve we uns is goin' ter hab a visitation!"

Betty dropped her work and gazed blankly at the black boy, who showed every sign of fear and secrecy.

"A what?" she asked, trembling a little.

"A visitation. Lawd! Miss Betty, I got clear frazzled, dat I did! I was a-comin' long de big road, a singin' dat hymn wot yo' ma done teach me 'bout trustin' in de Lawd, an' never bein' scared by nothin', when 'most a hundred ob de forlornest-lookin' critters all a-settin' by de road on de rail fence yelled at me. Dey had muskets, and seberal cannon an' things lyin' round near dem, an' one ob dem done ax me whar dey could get sumpin' ter eat. He said dey all had been eatin' yarbs an' roots an' stumps an' sich fur mos' a week, an' dey 'lowed dey was goin' ter hab sumpin'

better right now, even if dey had to eat roast nigger! Dat's what de critter said, sho' as I 'm a-standin' here."

"Oh!" groaned Betty, bending close, "what did you say, Cudjo? What did you do?"

"Well, I war n't in no condition to run, Miss Betty, or I would have done dat. I was feelin' mighty queer, me bein' de only nigger in sight. But I thought quick. I sized dem ragged rascals up as rebels, sho'! De king don't trap out his sojers in rags. No, sah! Den I 'member how as Miss Jane is a rebel, an' so I sent 'em down Miss Jane's way wid 'structions as to de bes' way ob killin' chickens quick."

"Cudjo!" Betty was torn between conflicting emotions. "Oh! Cudjo, how could you?"

"Lawd, Miss Betty! sumpin' had to be done, an' quick, too. Somebody's hen house had to suffer, an' loose victuals taken. Does yo' tink I'se goin' to direct dem rebels to my massa's place?"

"Oh! I suppose not, Cudjo. Indeed, I suppose you did right. Father is away, all the hands but you are in the fields; it would have been awful if they had gotten here. A hundred, did you say?"

"Sho'!"

"And guns, and cannon?" Betty was deathly pale.

"Heaps ob dem!"

"And hungry men are so desperate!" groaned the girl.

"Cudjo, you are faithful, are you not? I mean if danger came you would want to fight for the king, would you not?"

"Lawd, Miss Betty! I ain't wantin' ter fight fer nobody. I don't 'bleve in fightin'. Some one always gets hurt, an' like as not I might be de one. I generally is down in de quarters. 'Sides 'taint Christian an' I'se been saved by de grace ob de Lawd, but I'se bound ter look out for my folks when massa ain't here, an' corse if fightin' has got to be done, an' we all

can't run an' hide, why corse I'se got ter do my best, but—fo' de Lawd!"

"Cudjo, what is the matter?" Betty dared not look for herself. The slave boy's eyes of terror unnerved her. She clung to him helplessly while he continued to stare behind her.

"Dey is all comin'!" moaned the boy.

"Who?" Betty's voice was hoarse with agony.

"De whole hundred ob dem!"

Well did the girl know even before the answer came. Then courage grew. She dropped her arms from the trembling slave and faced the coming hundred.

There, coming up the path, were eleven poor ragged fellows. Each man followed his comrade, making a wavering single file. Two or three carried guns, but the cannon were not in sight. Betty shivered as relief came with the sight.

Now what had really happened was this. The hungry, tired men, who were continentals

"'Dey is all comin',' moaned the boy"

on their way to join Marion, had been wandering for days in swamps, eating what they could find, just as they had told Cudjo; and when he directed them to the widow Barton's they had gone there as soon as they could limp along. Jane and her mother heard their story, bound up their bruised feet, and fed them from their humble store. But there was nothing left for them to carry with them to their dauntless leader. Then Jane conceived a mighty scheme. Their slave boy, Tom, had been up to the Nortons' place that day to see about a cow that had strayed from its pasture. Coming back later Tom had explained "that ebbery man pusson was away from de Norton house, an' de women was afraid to leave their shelter."

Jane suspected Mrs. Norton's sympathy with the cause; indeed, she had whispered to Jane when Adrian marched away that "a house divided against itself might fall." Jane concluded that she meant more than one

house, and the thought gave her courage now. "I wonder," she pondered, as she watched the weary, famished men, "I wonder if the house of Norton would topple under a well-directed assault?" The witch-light shone in the dark eyes, and it had not been seen there for many a day. "I 'm going to tell you a great secret!" she said, leaning her elbows on the table around which the hungry continentals were grouped, and speaking softly.

Mrs. Barton was rummaging in the closet, gathering what she could to further aid the men, and she took little heed of Jane's whisper. "I wonder if I can trust you?"

"That you can, lass!" vouched the leader through a mouthful of cornbread; "we all know how to behave to a lady."

"Well, then," Jane went on hurriedly, "do you know where the Norton place is?"

Most of the men were from distant villages, and they shook their heads. Two or three, however, nodded absently while they reached for the food near at hand.

"It 's the next house up the hill, and off from the big road, to your right. The men are all away to-day. There are only two women and a few house servants to reckon with."

"The leader laid down his slice of bread"

The leader laid down his slice of bread and stared at Jane. He began to be interested. The girl, with an expression of almost infantile innocence, hurried on.

"The Norton place is always rich in food.

Whatever the men think, the women are for—the cause (oh, Jane!). Should the men return while you are there, I warn you to take to your heels; but the women, if rightly managed, will give freely."

The circle of begrimed faces grinned appreciatively.

"No violence, remember," breathed Jane; "they are our friends."

A low murmur of promise echoed in the low room.

"Gather all you can—of food. Nothing else, mind you!"

Another muttered promise.

"There is a closet off the kitchen where the finer goods are kept"—did not Jane know the place?—"but for good, reliable provisions, I commend you to the smoke house and store room. The latter is off the living room, and under lock and key. You may have to threaten force to get the keys; only threaten, understand! The mistress must give account

of the keys to her lord and master, and she will only relinquish them after a good scare—but I 'd get the keys if possible. Bear in mind the women are for the cause! They may pretend they are not. They stand in awe of the men—few know their secret. Now that you share it, deal wisely and as I have suggested, or I will tell Marion!"

The men arose, and again vowed they would do all that the informer could desire, then with thanks and a loyal cheer for the cause, the ragged company made for the Norton place.

Too late to recall them, Jane realized with a sickening shudder what she had done.

"I 'm a traitor!" she groaned, rushing to the little gate from which she could see her late guests going at double-quick up the hill, "a traitor to Betty and my own honesty! Suppose the men should harm them? But oh! they dare not! Marion would string every one of them up. But oh! I shall never dare look Betty in the face again! My own dear

Bet." And then after the manner of girls, poor Jane sank to the ground and burying her face in her brown hands she had a good, comforting cry.

In the meantime Betty and Cudjo were facing the foe.

"Cudjo," whispered Betty, looking very tragic and scared, "remember you are to defend your master's property with—your—your life."

"Ya-as, Miss Betty!" But already Cudjo was waiting for Betty to take to her heels in order that he might use his own.

"I—I must go to mother!" moaned Betty, "but you are to stand right here, and if they get into the house it must be over your dead body!"

"Ya-as 'm!" Cudjo trembled, and his face had a gray tint that was really awful.

Off went Betty, and as her skirt flitted into the doorway the slave boy—while yet there was life in him—ran for a distant woodpile.

"Mother!" cried Betty, rushing into the living room where Mrs. Norton was peacefully polishing the sacred family silver that she entrusted to no hands but her own; "mother, they are coming!"

"Who, child?"

"Marion's men! Ragged and desperate are they. Starved, too, I 'll warrant. Jane Barton has sent them here! Oh! I know Jane has done this treacherous thing. Jane shall suffer! But mother—stand firm!" Betty's own standing was so insecure that she reeled against the table, and her pretty face was as white as her snowy kerchief. Mrs. Norton got to her feet in an unsteady fashion, and through chattering teeth commanded her daughter.

"Stand up, Betty, child! Spread your skirts in front of grandmother's silver. Oh! woe is me." And so they stood awaiting their doom.

The men were at the door almost at once. Evidently Cudjo's body, alive or dead, had not hindered them.

Mrs. Norton looked at the young, pinched faces clustering in the hall, and her motherly heart ached with pity.

They were so forlorn and brave! They were daring so much for the cause that she, in her soul, favored. Her own kin away off in Concord and Lexington were struggling, too, for freedom while she, the only one of their name, stood against them and the cause! Here her soft eyes filled.

"Suppose Adrian should look so?" she thought in that one waiting moment; "oh! then please God, let friend or foe be merciful and kind!"

"Madam!" the leader took off his battered cap, "we know all!" Betty's eyes blazed.

"We must ask you," the man continued, "to hand over those keys and just step outside. We ain't going to touch your silver ma'am. It don't agree with our stomachs, and stomachs are about all we 've got now. But food ma'am, we 've got to get. Senti-

ments are sentiments, and your husband is welcome to his and you to yours. But food

"'Food, ma'am, we've got to get'"

ain't sentiment, it 's fact, and facts are what we 're after."

The boyish eyes twinkled in Betty's direction.

"That girl down the road apiece back is a good friend to you!" he said.

"Oh, is she!" flared poor helpless Betty. The twinkle had lessened her terror, but it had set her anger free.

"Yes, miss," the man continued, "and to our cause! Now it stands to reason," he turned to Mrs. Norton, "you 'd cling to the keys, being a faithful wife, but even a misguided Royalist ain't going to blame his women folk when, alone and unprotected, they are commanded by Marion's men to drop the keys and skedaddle!"

"How dare you!" cried Betty, and she looked positively fierce.

"Oh, miss, if you ever go for three days on an empty stomach, you 'll soon learn how easy daring comes."

"She's acting it up splendid!" spoke a recruit in the rear; "I 'low to goodness, to see

her anyone would think she was for Georgie. Hurry up, Foster, the father may come back; we ain't got any too much time."

"Madam, those keys!" commanded the leader, who was called Foster.

"He was making for the rear"

"I—I shall summon the slaves," panted Mrs. Norton; "cause or no cause, this is an outrage."

"Cudjo!" screamed Betty, hoping against hope that the boy had escaped with his life.

"If you mean the rascal who was with you on the porch," one of the men put in, "the last we saw of him he was making for the rear with the pink soles of his feet mostly showing."

"Madam," again spoke Foster with grave dignity, "you 've made a good enough fight to suit even the king. Those keys at once, or I shall—" He stepped forward with menace in his gaze.

"Mother!" screamed Betty, "what shall we do?"

"Run!" suggested a rollicking fellow, pressing closer, "run. Leave your house to us. We 'll tell all over the country how you defended the property with your life. Trot on now, miss, and give us fair play."

"Shame!" sobbed Betty; "cowards you are to force women! Run, mother—" for the crowd was muttering, "run! but take the keys!"

Away the two scampered, out of the back

door and down the porch steps. They drew their skirts close as they fled, and how could anyone foresee that the keys which were securely fastened at the mother's waist should slip from their moorings and drop right at the leader's feet? Once left to themselves the men fell to work. Thanks to Jane Barton they made no mistakes in their raid. Store room and smoke house were merrily entered. They loaded themselves from the generous shelves and hooks, and then turned, and heavily laded went their way. From a clump of bushes Betty and her mother watched them depart.

"Thanks, ma'am!" Foster lifted his cap in salute.

"Thanks, miss!" ran down the ragged line. Then the last one, a sickly, sad-eyed boy, paused. "There 's no patriot like one who through love must hide his loyalty," he whispered. "I know, madam, for—for I am running away from home, and my heart is like

lead. I know Adrian, madam, and if it comes my way, I 'll serve him for his patriot mother and sister!" Tears stood in Mrs. Norton's eyes, and, as Betty tried to disclaim her enforced patriotism, the mother checked her.

"For the patriots!" Some one started the cry, "one, two, three!" The cheer rang clear and loud. Then wending their way toward the road, and bending under the goodly loads, Marion's recruits faded from sight, all unanimous in their admiration for that unintentional patriot—Betty!

But that little Royalist, as fear fled and anger gained strength, was turning into a small fury. She broke away from her mother and ran down the lane shaking her fists in comic manner.

"The king!" she shouted to empty space, "I am for his Majesty!" The startled twitter of a bird alone replied.

Then the quivering form paused, and the pretty face bent low in shamed impatience.

"Jane—Jane shall rue this day!" she sobbed. "Jane shall smart for this when the king's men come. Oh! I hate Jane, I do indeed!"

Then she, too, cried comfortably, regained her calm and walked back to the house.

"Mother, what shall we do?" she asked quietly.

"Get to our baking, Bettina. Nothing is taken but food, poor lads, and Aunt Chloe, you and I can soon fill the shelves. The smoke house is the worse; but—well, Betty, I really think we did all that we could—under the circumstances."

CHAPTER III

BETTY HAS HER TURN

MR. NORTON returned late in the day, and there was a hearing at the bar of justice.

That his wife and daughter were compelled, by force, to run was soon apparent; but the lusty gentleman stormed at the dropped-keys episode. And why Cudjo did not run for help was a matter Cudjo could not satisfactorily explain; and he heard discourses upon the matter that convinced him that come what might in the future, he had better not take refuge behind the wood-pile.

Betty's heart was sore against Jane. To think that Jane, misled by a false cause, should turn the war dogs loose—those poor,

ragged chaps hardly deserved the name—on her! They might have murdered her mother and her, and Jane would not have cared. Oh! Jane should suffer. And then to have those idle scamps go away thinking she, Bettina Norton, was for that scallawag, Marion; she, who worshiped the king! Oh! the humiliation was bitter. But suddenly her wrath against Jane was diverted. A whisper crept around the country-side that caused much anxiety to the Loyalists. It ran to the effect that the terrible Marion was again near at hand. He was endeavoring, with his ever-growing company, to gain an exit across country and join a much larger force. And with this rumor came another. The British were coming to intercept him!

It was talked at the Blue Horse Tavern over flowing bowls that there were soon to be rousing times. The men repeated the awful prophesies to their families. If Marion succeeded in escaping now, then indeed would

George the Third have his hands full in the south. But if Marion could be caught, and his dangerous band scattered, why all trouble would be at an end. It had, at last, come to a crisis. The Blue Horse Tavern was filled every night with an excited company, who, after drinking well on toward morning, were afraid to go home alone, and so stayed on until sunup.

No child in the hamlet but went to bed with the covers over his head. If he were a king's child, he trembled at the thought of the death-dealing Marion. If he were a patriot child, he shivered at the thought of being dragged back to England in chains, providing he escaped a torturous death in the colonies!

Little girls scurried along in broad daylight with their dolls squeezed to their throbbing hearts. And little boys played soldier very near the doorways.

They were strenuous times. The colonies of the south were as turbulent as those of the

north. Washington held the patriot hope of the north near his great heart, and Marion, born the same year as Washington, and loving freedom with equal ardor, held the hope

"Little boys played soldier very near the doorways"

of victory aloft down in the sunny south.

And so the people waited.

"Dey do say down at de Blue Hoss," gasped Cudjo to Betty, "dat Marion is hidin' hisse'f wid four millim men in de swarmp—back ob our place!"

"Nonsense!" snapped Betty, but she hastened her steps. "No one could live there. Besides he 'd be afraid."

" 'Fraid ob what?"

"Afraid of us!"

Even Cudjo laughed at this.

"Dat man is hoodooed," he confided; "ain't nobody goin' to catch him. He kin spirrit hisse'f away, and dey do say he hab twenty armies in twenty places; he jes' flits round 'mong them like a—a flea fur sho'!"

"Cudjo! But anyway the British are coming. I heard my father say so. Lord Cornwallis will soon rout this—this foolish man. Cudjo, what was that?"

Betty clung to the slave boy.

"Dese are stirrin' times, sho'!" gasped Cudjo, and the two waited. They were a good distance from the house. Cudjo had been sent with Betty as a protection to and from a neighbor's place. Again the crackling noise.

"Some one is coming," breathed Betty, and she felt her courage ooze. Cudjo had run when danger threatened before; but at that time he had, as he thought, only his own skin to look out for. Now Betty was in his care, and he thought first of her.

"Miss Betty, you jes' shin up dat tree! Ef it am a frien' yo' kin slide down, if it am a foe den de good Lawd knows de higher up yo' are de better fur all consarned. Scoot!"

"I—I cannot climb," moaned Betty, and she recalled Jane's ability in that direction.

"Ya-as yo' kin," commanded Cudjo. "I 'se goin' to protect yer, but I 'se goin' ter make yo' mind what I say."

Betty saw that Cudjo was trying to serve her, and she was not the girl to make things harder; so up the tree she clambered as best she could, and crouched down where the branches were thickest.

"Fo' de Lawd!" muttered Cudjo, at the foot of the tree, as he took a martial attitude, "fo'

de Lawd, I don' know, after de doin's ob dat Miss Jane, who am our frien' or foe."

Betty was thinking pretty much the same thing. Patriotism had been forced upon her, but would the other side believe that.

The steps drew nearer, and suddenly through the underbushes strode two tall Britishers, swaggering and laughing as they beheld Cudjo and his evident terror. "Well, blackamoor," cried one, "what ails you?"

"I—I did n't know, sah, wedder yo' uns were friends or foes. Dese am certainly upsettin' times."

"Well, now that you 've taken a good squint at us—which are we, friends or foes?"

"Sah, dat is 'cordin' ter how yo' uns act," stammered Cudjo.

"Whose slave are you?" asked the second man.

"I b'long ter Massa Norton."

"Norton, Norton," pondered the first speaker; "where have I heard that name recently?"

"Was n't it the Norton women who fitted out those rascals with food for Marion? We caught one, you know, and after torture he confessed. The others got away with the food, but we got valuable information about the family. Father all right; brother in the king's army, mother and girl for the rebels! Nice family group!"

"True!" laughed the first; "well, in such a case, first come first served. We are here now, and must get what we can; both sides will snatch from that house. Come Cuffy," turning to Cudjo, "where do they keep the silver, and where 's the pretty girl who fed her rebel lover?"

"We uns is all fur de king!" cried Cudjo. "Dat odder fuss war a terrible mistake. Dey jes' thought we uns were fur Massa Marion. Dey made my ole missey gib up de keys!"

"Oh! they just thought so!" roared the men; "that 's a good one! Well, we just think so, too. Come, blackie, tell all the family secrets. Where is the treasure?"

"We uns ain't got no treasure." Cudjo was getting stubborn. If they would not believe him, he could at least stick to his point, and Betty, up the nearby tree, was an added inducement.

"Now you see, inky boy," laughed the leader of this distinguished raiding party, "it is this way. We know Colonel Norton is a good Tory; but he 's down at the tavern airing his views; we know, too, that your women are for Marion, and gave food to his men, and now while the cat 's away we 're going to get our share. We 're hungry, and we mean to get food, and you 've got to tell us where they keep the silver and valuables. You 've got to run up to the house now and fetch down victuals; and to-night we 're going to help ourselves to the gold and silver through a window that you 'll leave open!"

Cudjo was staring blankly at the rascals, his mouth hanging limply open.

"Dat all am a—big—lie!" he gasped at

last; "ain't nuffin' like dat air goin' ter happen roun' here, sah!"

"Listen!" said the spokesman; "maybe you don't know what we do with folks like you. If they disobey in the least particular we cut them in inch pieces and feed them to our dogs!"

Cudjo turned a grayish tint through his brown skin, but he spoke no word.

"You go now, my black friend, up to the house; and you tell your double-faced mistress to put up a jolly lot of goodies for—Marion, mind you! Then you toddle back here, and to-night you leave a convenient window open, and have the information ready as to where we 'll find the valuables. That 's your day's work. And if you ever let a word out about it from between those gravestones of yours, we 'll cut you up according to pattern; and that will be our day's work. Come now, scurry!"

"I ain't doin' scurryin' fur gemmen like

you uns!" blurted Cudjo. He saw danger near at hand, but, with the faithfulness of his kind, a dumb bravery came to him and he stood firm.

"You are going to defy us?"

"Dat I is! An' I don' b'leve yo' uns is king's men. I b'leve you stole yo' cloes. I dun reckon yo' is debbuls!"

"Lean up against that tree!" With a terrified face Cudjo pleaded:

"Massa, let me take dis tree!" How could he let them shoot him beneath the tree in which Betty crouched.

"Back up, you black imp!" Despairingly Cudjo obeyed.

"Take aim!" The two guns were leveled, but just then a disturbance arose. Down from the leafy hiding place slipped Betty. Jane might have excelled her in getting up a tree, but no mortal girl could have slipped down better. A courage and pride shone in Betty's lovely eyes. At the sight of her the British guns fell.

"You—you shall not kill him!" sobbed Betty, "or if you do you shall kill me, too. He has spoken truly, but I will not stoop to explain to you. I tell you, though—if he and I live to get away, your general shall hear of this. The king would scorn such soldiers as you! Now shoot!"

Betty was trembling sadly. She clung to Cudjo, but in her pale face there was no cowardice.

Here was a situation indeed! For a moment the redcoats considered whether it would not be necessary for them to shoot both slave and girl in order to save themselves. But an unlooked-for solution came to shape their ends.

"Drop your guns!"

A clear, strong voice broke the awful suspense. One of the Britishers turned and there with guns pointed dangerously straight stood a boy in rough Continental uniform and a girl with blazing eyes, but true aim.

"Massa Philip!" almost moaned Cudjo, so great was his relief. "Jane!" cried Betty, and forgetting her past anger toward her old friend, she stretched appealing arms toward the two who had been her closest comrades in the old happy days.

"Poor little Bet!" answered Jane; "steady, dear. Get out of the way, you and Cudjo. If we shoot, we want only to spill the blood of Englishmuns!" Jane was laughing even in that awful moment. Cudjo needed no second bidding. With the British guns lowered and the rebel guns pointing true he believed in neutrality, and was for making tracks homeward. But Betty, getting out of the range of possible firing, stood her ground.

"What are you going to do," she quavered, "with—with those men?"

"Oh! take them home and have them for supper," nodded Jane cheerfully.

"Put your guns on the ground!" commanded Philip sternly. Betty could but notice

"'How is I goin' to handle all dis artillery?'"

how manly he had grown; but oh! so pitifully thin and tired. The British guns clattered down.

"Cudjo, you take those things up to your

place and hide them—remember, hide them! Now, you villains, march on. Your general will hear of this later, but not now!"

The scared Englishmen obeyed. A sorry looking pair they were going forward with two guns pointed at their cowardly backs; and one held by a slip of a girl who, as she strode after them, whistled "Rule, Britannia, rule!" in a jovial way, as if the entire performance were one of the merry things of life.

Then Cudjo and Betty stood alone. In her great relief all thought but the one of gratitude was gone; now the girl began to recall the entire situation.

"Fo' de Lawd!" Cudjo groaned, "how is I goin' to handle all dis artillery?"

"I 'll take some." Betty bent to help.

"Cudjo," her voice was trembling, "Cudjo, that was Philip Barton!"

"Cose it war!" Cudjo thought fear had addled Betty's wits.

"Cudjo, Philip Barton has come back!"

"Now yo' see heah, Miss Betty, dis ain't no time fur sich nonsense; yo' jes' take dose devil-guns an' git!"

Betty staggered along under her load.

"Cudjo," she at last whispered, and a wonderful light shone in her eyes, "Cudjo, if he is back, perhaps—perhaps—well, we must not say one word to a living soul; and we must hide the guns—it is only common decency."

CHAPTER IV

BETTY SWINGS THE LANTERN AND JANE BLOWS THE HORN

AND now comes the story of how two girls brought on an encounter between the king's men and the Americans—an encounter full of bravery, suffering, and heartache. Perhaps the enemies would have met in any case; indeed, sooner or later they surely would, but not upon that particular night. Both sides were worn with travel and hunger; both had crept into the quiet Carolina village from different quarters, keeping a sharp watch for each other; and as luck or fate would have it, neither had caught a glimpse of the enemy. Both sides considered themselves in safety. They might have rested and stolen away without an en-

counter—such things had occurred in that thickly-wooded, thinly-populated country; but in this case Betty had seen Philip Barton, and Philip and Jane had two of the king's men in tow and the circumstances were full of possibilities.

As Betty and Cudjo strode home, bearing their newly-acquired firearms, Betty's thoughts went soaring into the future.

Philip was certain to be near the place of action. Since he had come home, why then—Betty recalled Cudjo's words about the swamp, and she shuddered as she went.

Well, Philip and Jane had saved her life and Cudjo's. To an extent she owed them much, but not enough to make her untrue to her cause. The little head flung back, and Betty, recalling Jane's treachery about the hungry recruits, hardened her heart.

"It was because of that," she considered, "my position is misunderstood to-day. Jane would never have had cause to save me if she had not first betrayed me!"

But that was not so certain, and the honest girlish heart acknowledged it as it remembered the two coarse villains. And Philip and Jane, walking behind those two coarse villains, had their thoughts.

"Phil," said Jane, in a perfectly audible tone, "do you suppose our pair of British heroes came here alone?"

"No," answered Philip slowly; "such gentlemen travel in crowds. They fear to be far from aid and protection. They may hunt young girls and poor negro slaves, but you take my word, they know where they can run for cover."

"Shall we torture them and make them tell?" Jane's eyes danced and she shook so with laughter that her rifle pointed anything but true.

"Oh, no!" Philip carelessly returned. "How could we trust them? Besides, with Marion and a thousand men within earshot, it really does not matter whether the king's men are near or not."

This remark had the desired effect. The two gentlemen in advance showed every sign of fear; even their backs were expressive and their legs shook under them. And so they came to the Barton place and were locked in an old outhouse. Either Jane or Philip was always on guard, and they were fed at infrequent intervals by a slave woman, Betsy by name.

Betsy was a worthy follower of her patriot family. John, the one deserter, she thought she had cast from her heart.

"I got ole Miss, lil' Miss Jane an' Massa Phil," she often muttered. "Massa John, he done strayed into outer darkness, an' dat chile am stone dead to me."

But when poor Betsy said that she was near to tears, for John was dearer, now that darkness engulfed him, than he had ever been before.

However, the present condition thrilled Betsy's being. As seldom as Philip and Jane

would permit, she fed the prisoners; and when she was compelled to do the irksome duty she made the occasion notable to them and whoever might be on guard.

"Has—has I got to feed dem—dem dorgs again?" she asked Jane the second day of imprisonment.

Jane was knitting on the back porch, and she nodded her head. "Wait a minute," she added, "until I get my gun. There! now feed them. I 've got the window covered. Make them ask prettily, Betsy. I declare, by the time they go before Marion their manners will be vastly improved."

With a snort Betsy took her platters to the little window where two ugly, scowling faces greeted her.

"Heah, yo' white trash!" she saluted, "is dem yo' best manners? Scowlin' like a thunder-cloud at a 'spectable black lady what is bringin' food to yer? Git a smile on yer faces, or yo' is sho' goin' tu get no victuals

from dis quarter. I 'd like ter box yo' ears for yo'. Yo' ain't nebber had no bringin' up, an' I clar I 'd like nothin' better nor trainin' yo' both!"

"'Heah, yo' white trash!' she saluted"

"Give us that food!" roared one; "corn cakes again by heaven! Jones, can we stand them?"

"I reckon we 'll have to, Andrews," grinned Jones; "they 'll keep life in us until help comes, and then these rebels will get their deserts."

"Miss Jane, yo' hear de tarnal dorgs? An' yet yo' say feed 'em."

"Yes," smiled Jane, cocking her gun and thinking of pretty Betty as she stood under the tree that day. "Feed them, but make them say General Marion and General Washington!"

"Say it!" commanded Betsy.

"Never!" cried both gallants at once.

"You 'll say it or go hungry," smiled Jane, laying down her gun and taking up her stocking.

"An' I ain't a goin' ter wait long," added Betsy; "yo' uns get yo' manners on pretty lively, or dis corn food is goin' ter yo' betters. Hogs ain't findin' fault wid corn cakes."

Even the prisoners roared with laughter. The corn cakes and pork had kept up their strength, and a good bed had helped to rest their tired bodies. Jane's gun had kept them from escape during the day, and Philip's night watch was most untiring. Betsy was their

only diversion. She was a new type to them—she and Cudjo.

They had not succeeded in frightening Cudjo into cowardice, and they could not buy Betsy, although they had tried, first with promises of the king's favor and court honors, and lastly with silver and gold pieces, which Betsy could better comprehend. Failing in this, the British subjects resigned themselves to their prison house, and watched and waited for the coming of their comrades, when rescue for them and dire punishment to the house of Barton would follow—unless Jane told of the escapade in the woods. That possibility hung gloomily over them.

"Say, is yo' two goin' ter say General Massa Marion an' General Massa Washington? Quick, now; one—two—!"

"Yes!" yelled the hungry pair, and with wry faces they gave the dignified titles to the men who just then were most upsetting the king's peace of mind and their own.

"Now," snapped Betsy, "aim yo' gun, Miss Jane, while I poke in de food, and 'taint no manner ob consequence if de trigger acts up. Here, you two, eat what noways b'longs to yo'!"

She jammed the platters in and then secured the bars which Philip had hastily constructed across the window.

Jane took up her knitting with a sigh. She was tired and a bit hungry. There were none too many corn cakes in those days. They were saving all they could for Marion's men, who, Philip had come to warn them, would pass that way and pause for rest and food. Jane knew that in the swampy land between her home and the Norton place a hundred weary men were hiding. When night fell she and Betsy and the little mother stole, heavily laded, to the darksome spot, and gave their all to the grateful men. She knew that Marion was coming to take command before the army started on, and loyal Jane forgot her hunger

in her glory of the work for the splendid patriot.

"Oh!" she often said, with tears in her bonny eyes, "if only John were on our side! John and—and Adrian." And then a bright tear fell on the rough yarn sock.

"I wonder," she mused on, "if it lay in our power to act, I wonder if Betty or I could serve the side we favor? Each has a dear one in the enemy's ranks—for Betty will never forget Philip!"

Jane was right. Betty could not forget. But Jane reckoned without Betty's Puritan blood. Betty's heart might break, but she could sacrifice herself and her dearest loves for a cause in which she trusted. She was a stern little martyr, though few suspected it. Jane was a child of the Sunny South, full of daring and warmth. She could love deeply, but her quick wit and generous heart would always find a way, if possible, to shield friend or foe from harm. And then Marion and his

men came! It was a dark, blustering night when, keeping to the shadows, they filed into the Barton gate, and sank down where they could, while the ready women fed them and pityingly bathed their bruises and wounds.

Marion brought news that was not as shocking to Philip and Jane as it was to the others. The king's men were congregating in the neighborhood. A boy had met Marion on the way, and told him that seven hundred were within calling distance and the officers were putting up at the Norton place.

"And," smiled Marion, with that bravery which never deserted him, "they think us miles away. They must continue to think so until we make true their belief. We must get away. We must join General Greene. Once our forces combine, that for the redcoats!" He snapped his fingers gaily.

"This is the crucial time," he went on, munching the baked sweet potato that Jane handed him; "seven hundred to four hundred

is n't fair. Of course, if necessary, we could fight and—yes, by heaven! we could win; but this time we want to reach Greene with our ranks unbroken. Eat, my men; eat and sleep; by to-morrow night we must take to the road."

And in the outhouse the two Britishers, pressing against the barred window, heard this edifying news and gritted their teeth in impotent rage. They peered closer. Black forms, darker even than the dense night, moved wearily about.

"Can we make a break, do you think?" whispered Andrews to his silent mate.

"If you do, I 'll break your heads!" came the startling reply. And the prisoners found themselves facing Philip Barton, who had crept up to the window in the darkness.

And while all this was going on down at Jane's home, grander preparations were afoot at the Norton place. The officers who were not accommodated at the tavern were being entertained by Mr. Norton, who had suddenly

become "colonel" through no deed of his own.

The soldiers who accompanied the gallant officers were encamped on lawns and meadows, and drank "ill luck to old Marion, seventy miles away!"

They felt safe to cheer and drink with seventy good rough miles between them and their dreaded foe. At that distance he was harmless, and they were as brave as a king could desire his men to be.

Oh! it was a rollicking company. The countryside, had it known, might well have shuddered. But no one knew! The Norton place was isolated, and the still, dark night bore no sound far upon the way. Betty watched and listened and her sweet face grew paler.

Was Marion seventy miles away? Then why was Philip Barton at home? Certainly there was a meaning in his presence just at this time! Had her own dangerous position a short time ago not demanded his appearance, perhaps she would never have known of his

nearness. Well, the Britishers' guns were hidden! So far she would shield him and them. But all the king's men were not so rude as the fellows in the woods. Those striding in her father's hall and rooms were very elegant gentlemen indeed. They did not overlook a pretty maid, either. They repeated again and again and again that she need have no fear. They had come to save her and all the king's good subjects from Marion, the raider, who, they happened surely to know, was seventy miles away with but a handful of men!

"It will be but an hour's work to cut the rascal and his band in pieces!" boasted a big, jolly, red-faced Englishman. "We have our plans all laid out. A trip down the river, a surprise by night, and biff! my knight of the road is gone!"

Betty listened and her loyalty grew apace at the brave words, even while her gentle heart doubted. These big men served the

king. The king was ordained by God to rule the colonies.

Oh! Betty's creed was very simple. If they could serve, and surely these gallant soldiers were very wise, why she, even if it meant death, she must serve the king, how and when she could. Thinking this, Betty went out upon the veranda and peered into the dark, glowering night.

"Betty!" the girl gave a start. "'Sh! it is only Adrian—Adrian and John!"

"Oh!" gasped Betty, and the black night hid her pale, terrified face.

"Don't make a noise, sis," cautioned Adrian, "but listen: John wanted to see his mother and—and Jane; we stole there to-night and—we found the place full of men—and Philip."

"Yes; and Marion is there," whispered John. "I saw him once before. I could not mistake him."

"Sis," Adrian's voice shook with excitement, "our men think Marion is down the river, sev-

enty miles away. Now is our chance. If we fall on them to-night we—we can wipe them out!"

"Oh!" groaned Betty, and she hid her white face in her hands.

"Yes, there must be a big fight!" breathed John, and his young voice shook, for his boyish heart was sadly torn. "I—I wanted to see mother and Jane before we marched down upon the enemy. I wanted to bid them good-bye; but now I cannot. And—and if I die to-night, Betty, please tell them I loved them, and—and—but I had to fight for the king!"

"Die to-night?" moaned Betty.

"Yes," Adrian explained, "I 've just told the General, he 's on the upper gallery with father. He called me a good sentinel; and the signal to the men is a lantern waved from the hill back of the house. At that sign the men will gather and get their orders. Bet, the General wants me to swing the lantern!"

Betty's eyes were wide with horror. "You

will be calling them to murder our—our friends!" she sobbed.

"It is they or we." Adrian's lips set grimly over the words. "But, sis, I—I want to be with the others when they gather. I hate to disobey an order; but it is quite safe, and you know the way as well as I. I want you to swing the lantern!"

"I!" Betty rose in terror. "Oh, Adrian! how can I?"

"It is—for the king!" he faltered; "and Bet, if you do not warn them—you or I—Marion will get wind of our nearness and he will fall upon us. He is always falling on us and—and taking a mean advantage of us!"

Betty thought, and the knowledge grew upon her that Adrian spoke truly. Jane had two British prisoners. Oh, Jane would know, and Jane would act!

Hard as it was, she, loyal Betty Norton, must equal Jane for bravery.

"I 've never had a chance to fight for the

king," Adrian's boyish voice was pleading; "we 've always been running, or getting ready to run, and to-night is our chance. John is going to be within call, and—and no one will know, Betty. It is only the signal at the right time. No one will ever question who swings it."

"I 'll swing it!" breathed Betty through chattering teeth.

"Here it is." Adrian passed it to her.

"It 's lighted and covered with a cloth. It 's half-past eleven now. At midnight you must wave it from the hill. The sentinels watch that point."

"Betty!" it was John's voice now, "here is my watch. It was father's. Keep it until—afterward! Then—well, if I am not here, give it to mother—and tell her I could not help going!"

Tears fell upon the big timepiece in Betty's hand.

The two boys then crept away to their places

among the sleeping men, and Betty waited. Presently she raised the cloth from the lantern and peered at the watch.

"Twenty minutes more!" she moaned. "I must hurry." Then like a little white ghost she flitted past the magnolia bushes and up the steep hill back of the house. She was half-way up when a noise startled her. She stopped suddenly.

"Who goes there?" It was Jane's voice, and to speak truthfully it was a very shaking voice.

"Oh! Jane, you nearly frightened me to death," quavered Betty, and she leaned against a tree.

"Same to myself," fluttered Jane, and she braced herself against another tree.

"Betty, what are you doing up here?"

"What are you?"

"I—I am on my country's business."

"And I am on my king's!"

Both girls spoke as solemnly as if they, instead of Lord Rawdon and General Greene, had the fate of the colonies in their keeping.

"I suppose we both think we are right?" murmured Jane.

"I know I am!" Betty returned from her tree.

"Then we have only to obey orders, I reckon?"

"Exactly!" Betty was the positive one at that trying time.

"Betty, dear, at least we can trust each other. Tell me, dear Bet, what you are here for, and I will tell you."

"Truly?"

"Aye, Betty, truly." There was no joking in Jane's strong voice.

"I—I know Marion and his men are there!" Betty waved her hand down the hillside. Jane could not see the gesture, but she understood.

"And you are going to give a signal to—to the king's men?" This was a venture. Jane was doing some reconnoitering on her own responsibility, Philip being busy at the shed door, and the weary patriots resting.

"How did you know?" gasped Betty.

"Guessed," said Jane briefly. Then gently: "And Betty, dear, I am to blow a horn if I see the foe! Think, Bet. You and I will turn them loose on each other. Listen!"

From one side of the hill came the sentinel's cry:

"All 's well! Marion seventy miles away!" From the swampland only silence.

"Betty, dear, we each have loved ones on the opposite side; let us refuse to signal; let us give them a chance to—to get away!"

"Jane!" Betty ran forward. Every moment was precious now. She was afraid of Jane, but in the darkness she fled along. Jane was close on her heels. They reached the hilltop side by side. Jane again clutched through the darkness, and laid hands upon Betty.

"Oh, Bet! pray think!" she half sobbed.

"I did my thinking down below," answered Betty, struggling to free herself, and fearing that in the tussle the lantern's light might be extinguished.

"Phil told me to blow if I saw danger," panted Jane, "but I am willing to keep silence. To-morrow, Bet—to-morrow the two armies may move on and not attack each other. If we go home and go to bed all may be well."

"Think shame, Jane Barton!" cried Betty. "I know how you serve your side. You will send Marion's whole army over to our house, as you did those rebels not long ago. Oh! I know you, Jane, and you would take glory to yourself by so doing. Blow your horn if you will; but I swing my light! If they must fight, then—this for fair play!"

She had broken away. She tore off the cloth and madly waved the lantern aloft.

Poor Jane had barely breath to say, "And this for my God and country!" Then she blew brokenly upon her horn.

The still, dark night was a fit setting for the lantern's gleam and the horn's hoarse blast. Many a sleeping soldier roused and sprang into action at that startling sound. And there,

above on the hilltop, was the flickering light that warned the king's men that Marion, the awful, had in some manner got over the seventy miles with his vengeful men!

"Now you 've done it," groaned Jane, sinking upon the ground, "I hope you are satisfied!"

"You 've done it yourself!" sobbed Betty, flinging herself face downward on the moss.

"I reckon we 've brought the war to a finish!" Jane fiercely exclaimed; "oh! oh! oh!"

"Oh! oh!" echoed Betty. Then with a faint hope: "Maybe they 'll run!"

"If they do," muttered Jane, grimly, "Marion will run after them!"

"Jane!" Betty sat up tragically. "I—I did not mean that!"

CHAPTER V

HOW BETTY RODE AND SAVED THE DAY

THROUGH the darkness and terrible shouting Betty and Jane made their ways home. Betty hid under the covers of her bed and moaned miserably. Jane Barton stood guard at the shed prison, while Philip went to fight.

It was a fierce struggle. Until daylight the patriots and the Royalists swayed and shot to and fro; then Marion drove the British into a bog that Philip had pointed out, and those who were not too far gone begged for quarter and acknowledged their defeat.

Guarded by the American officers the English prisoners were marched to the meeting-house and locked in; the wounded were gathered up and distributed among the patriotic

families near by, and at last, as morning dawned, Jane, by the barred door of the outhouse, saw a returning party. Her heart throbbed painfully, for she saw Philip, blood-stained and haggard, bearing on his strong shoulders Marion, the General to whom they all looked for victory. In front of them marched, limpingly and slowly, Adrian and John, prisoners of war! John's shirt hung in tatters, showing a cruel wound in the shoulder. Adrian's right arm hung limply by his side. And to add to the horror of the scene, Jane saw that Philip was pointing a pistol at his wounded brother and friend!

"Quite a family party," cheerfully greeted Marion as they drew near, and he saw Jane's suffering face. "Nothing serious, my good child. Just a sprained ankle for me; but your brother's shoulders are strong. Drop the gun, Barton," he commanded Philip; "the poor chaps won't run now. Can you give them a bed, my girl, and get a doctor? A hole in the

"Adrian and John, prisoners of war"

shoulder and a broken arm must not go unheeded."

Jane braced herself for action. For a moment she thought she was going to faint. She —strong, hardy Jane!

Mrs. Barton and Betsy came running to the call, and when the mother saw her wounded boy she forgot he was an enemy to the cause. She took his swaying body in her arms and crooned over him in mother-love.

"I 've—come—home, mother," gasped John, and he swooned upon her breast.

"Even so," breathed Mrs. Barton, "and God be praised! Betsy, help Master Adrian. See, the poor lad is suffering. Oh, woe is me! To the guest-room, Betsy; the bed is wide enough for two until we can fetch a cot." And so to the guest-room they were helped, and side by side they lay upon the gaudy patchwork quilt, white, speechless and worn with the night's horror and bloodshed.

Boyhood friends and comrades, they had

not been divided in their loyalty to a cause. They had fallen while fighting for a king they believed they honored, and they had come to this!

Mrs. Barton and Betsy tended them with native skill while a slave boy went galloping over the countryside to get a doctor.

"Dis comes ob bein' foolish!" moaned Betsy, hovering over John. "Yo' lie still, chile, or mammy will box yo' ears!" And this to a king's soldier! Poor John smiled through his pain.

"Oh! I 'low 't is a grand thing for yo' to go trapsing off an' gettin' shot jus' for an ole king what don't love yo' like we does!" Betsy wiped her eyes on her apron. "You lie down, too, Massa Adrian, or I 'll tell yo' ma. A nice day's work dis am!"

And so she chattered as she bathed and soothed the boys. So she had tended them in the old days, when, after some mischief, they had come to her for solace, willing to take her grumbling into the bargain.

"Does yo' head hurt, Massa John? Well, lan' knows you desarve it! An' you, Massa Adrian! Yo' shirt am clar spoiled ter pay fur dis fight!"

Philip in the meantime had placed his burden on the settle in the hall. Then he ran for hot water and flannels, and soon had Marion's aching ankle in close bandages. Marion gave directions, often wincing with pain, but never losing his head. Then when the boyish surgery was over, the General lay back and slept the sleep of the exhausted.

But poor Philip had duties yet to perform. Weary as he was, he remembered his sister at her post by the outhouse. He staggered out to her and sank down beside her.

"I suppose those fellows saw the General?" he asked. "They never seem to sleep."

"Saw him!" Jane's teeth were chattering. "They certainly did. I had to—to drive them from the window!"

Philip came close. "They must not get

away now, Jane," he breathed; "they must not carry this news to the British!"

Jane started. "I 'll neither slumber nor sleep," she replied. "Go, Phil, go to sleep. I can stand it all day. You see I 've done nothing."

The doctor came and the three wounded heroes were attended to. From an upper window Jane heard John babble, in delirium, of old happy days. She heard Adrian moan as the bandaged arm twitched painfully. Through the open hall door she could see Marion, that doughty General, stretched on the settle, sleeping like a child; and Philip on the floor beside him, slumbering fitfully. Betsy had put a pillow under the boy's head, and his relaxed fingers held a gun. Jane was weary beyond all expression, but unflinchingly she stood guard. Once she looked into the window of the shed, and saw her prisoners crouched in the farthest corner, eating the supply of corn bread which Betsy had warned them must last all day.

"After they eat they will sleep," sighed Jane; and she sat on the stone step to rest her weary back.

At three o'clock Philip came to her.

"I 'm all right now," he said; "you look half dead, Jane. Take a good rest. What are the birds doing?"

"Sleeping," yawned Jane; "go take a look at the beauties." Philip went. Then in an awful tone he hissed: "Jane, they are gone! They 've dug themselves out!"

"Gone!" Jane was by her brother's side. There was the gaping hole and the shed room was empty. "What shall we do?" groaned she.

"Keep quiet. They will not travel far until dark. I 'm going to hunt them down."

"Do—do you need me?"

"No, Janie. You see I may not be able to bring them back—alive. But they are unarmed. Don't say a word, but act as if they were still inside. Good-bye!"

He was gone upon the perilous errand and Jane took her place on the stone step.

And so the afternoon passed. At nightfall Philip returned. He went at once to General Marion and told his story. The two had escaped, and ten miles beyond a company of Britishers, three hundred strong, were on their way to join forces at Colonel Norton's place.

"There are no forces there," laughed Marion, but his face grew grave.

"I—I must rally my men and give the redcoats a welcome half way," he mused.

"You!" exclaimed Philip. "Why the two who have escaped will tell the Britishers of your plight. General, we must hide you!"

"Yes, or get me a fast horse. Put me on horseback at the head of my men and—and the victory is ours!"

"A fast horse!" Philip was almost crying in his boyish agony and dread. "Why, General, there is only one right smart fast horse anywhere around. That one belongs to Mr. Norton."

"Could you get it?"

"Get it?" The question came so simply that

"Jane saluted bravely"

Philip stared vacantly. "I reckon not. No one can ride the beast but Mr. Norton and Miss Betty. Mr. Norton the brute fears, Betty he loves."

Marion thought deeply.

"Go bring your sister here," he said at last. And Jane came. She was pale and heavy-eyed, but she saluted bravely.

"Do you know Colonel Norton's daughter well?" Marion asked gently.

"Yes, sir." Jane colored. "Before—before we took sides she was my dearest friend."

"Suppose you went to her and told her her brother was here—wounded. Do you think she would come to see him? Come on her father's fast horse, perhaps?"

Jane shook her head.

"Betty would have to consult her father. Betty is a good girl." A grim smile played about Jane's tired mouth.

"Umph! And you?" Marion's eyes danced.

"I 'm not so good. If I could bring the horse to you, sir, I would risk my life to do it; but he would throw me at the first step. I 'm not much of a horse-woman. But—" Jane had seen the anxious look in the keen eyes, "I can try!"

"If I do not get away to-night," said the man, "I 'm afraid they will have me. I hate to give the cause up, with Greene so near!"

"You shall not!" whispered Jane, and her face set into hard lines. "I 'll—try!"

She went slowly upstairs. She must bathe her aching head and—think! As she passed along the upper hall she saw Adrian Norton's uniform hanging over the balustrade. She stood still, blushed, trembled, then snatched the suit and fled to her room.

A half hour later a slim lad in the king's colors crept from the house and made for the road which lay dusty and white under a starlit sky. The sleeves and trouser legs were too long for the gallant soldier boy, but he ran along briskly, little heeding those defects; and he pulled his cap over a head recently and badly cropped. At the bend of the road came a stern command:

"Halt! Friend or foe?"

"Good Lord!" The young Britisher leaped

a clean foot into the air; then, as the sentinel held his lantern aloft, his rough face became clear to the boy.

"A friend, of course! What a fool you are, Peter Larkin, not to know me." There was a suggestion of tears in the indignant voice.

"Give the countersign." Peter Larkin, late village blacksmith, but present sentinel for the American army under General Marion, strode out to the middle of the road. "Give the countersign," he repeated.

"I—I don't know it. Peter Larkin, don't you know Jane Barton; you who have seen her grow up?"

"Jane Barton!" The man fell back. "Jane Barton, and in a Britisher's togs! And a lad's at that! May the good Lord have mercy upon us all!"

"Oh!" Jane flared up, flushing rosily, "I 'm just as ashamed as I can be. You need not make it worse, Peter Larkin."

Jane fled to the shelter of a tree by the road-

side. From that vantage point she said authoritatively, "Turn your head, Peter, and when I go down the road you 're not to look at me!"

"Certainly, Miss," nodded Peter, and he obeyed meekly and humbly.

"Peter!" Jane was upon the road and the sight of Peter's back gave her courage and self-respect. "Peter, do you know Mr. Norton's mare, Dare Devil?"

"Know her!" Peter's voice sounded muffled, for not trusting to simply turning away he was also burying his face in a leafy branch. " 'Deed I does know the imp. The last time I shoed the beast she knocked out two of my front teeth. When I try to sing in choir now, I sound like an adder. Know Dare Devil! I reckon I does. Every time I hiss in my singing I think of the varmint!"

"Well, Peter, mind well what I say. If you should see Miss Betty Norton riding Dare Devil down this road presently, you 're not to

stop her and ask for the countersign, or you may get the rest of your teeth kicked out. Who's going to think of countersigns in times like these?"

"Why, Miss," Peter had his mouth full of leaves, "these is times that make countersigns necessary."

"Well, I 'm not going to bother with them, and neither is Miss Betty. She may not be able to say what she thinks, Peter; but Miss Betty is willing to act for the cause. You understand?"

Peter did not, but he said he did.

"And, Peter, if Miss Betty should come riding by here on Dare Devil—I only say if, but you must be prepared—why you just let her go, and never you say one word to a living soul. There are patriots and patriots, Peter. 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform'." Bible reference always subdued Peter. "Now, Peter, do not look, I 'm going to run; and if Miss Betty comes this way—she is headed for General Marion!"

Peter jumped. Mr. Norton's daughter headed for the rebel General! Here was food indeed for the new-fledged sentinel.

Behind him sounded the scurry of nervous feet up the road; but Peter's honor was as trusty as his own anvil; never a look looked he until the footbeats were beyond hearing. Then hugging his gun to his massive chest, honest Peter took his place by the side of the king's highway.

"Gells is queer critters," mused he, "and it looks mightily as if they was taking a hand in this trouble, and that always bodes more trouble. A patriot in a red coat—and a gell at that! A Tory maid riding her father's horse straight to our General! And never a countersign among them but Miss Jane's impudence and Dare Devil's heels. What am I to think? Surely God does move in a mysterious way—"

Peter began to sing the old hymn, striding to and fro in the fragrant gloom. Silence

everywhere, except for the sentinel's lonely tune. Friend and foe bided their time and opportunity. Plans were being hatched and hopes indulged, but the still night held the secrets.

But now Jane was at the Norton place, and the hardest task of her life, so far, lay before her. She hated lying and deceit. When before she had sent the hungry men to Betty's home there had been little method in her folly. It was more a bit of girlish fun. This was different. Time and trouble had touched Jane heavily even in the few weeks. She shrank from using Betty to further her own ends. Could she have ridden Dare Devil herself she would have risked her neck without a doubt, but she could not ride the fiery beast. Betty ran no danger in so doing. She managed the horse easily, and the horse must be got to Marion! That injured General must be at the head of his men at break of day and well on his way to meet the advancing foe.

No, there was but one way. Betty must again be laid an unintentional sacrifice upon the altar of patriotism.

As Jane approached the house she heard Mr. Norton tramping up and down the piazza, giving free vent to his opinions and now and then forgetting the presence of his wife and daughter as he punctuated his remarks by descriptive and lurid vows and hopes of vengeance. Occasionally his womenkind tried to calm him, but his loud voice drowned their weaker ones at every attempt.

"No, mum, don't ' 'sh!' me. I tell you we 've got to terrorize the rascals! As soon as our men get out of the meeting-house they must demand justice; and when help comes we must string the rebels up—women and children! String 'em up, mum, in plain daylight as warnings!"

"Father!" Betty's voice was full of tears.

"Don't you 'father' me, Miss! What do I hear at the tavern but that you and your mother fed a lot of the scamps!"

"But, father, I—we can explain—"

"Explain! explain! Is this a time for explaining? Don't whine another word at me. My boy taken by the rebels! My son at their mercy! Think, mum, of the disgrace and ignominy!"

"But, father," Betty pleaded, "Adrian may have escaped. Not all the king's men are in the meeting-house."

"There, or in the bog!" snorted the infuriated man. "Was n't that just like that demon Marion to lead the British into that dirty marsh? I tell you, Miss, that fellow don't know what clean fighting is. He likes to wallow!" And then followed some forceful, unadorned Saxon oaths.

"My dear," cried Mrs. Norton, "and such language for Bettina to hear!"

"Then let the minx go where she cannot hear. Take yourself around to the west veranda, Bet. Am I to be hushed in my own house?"

Betty ran around to the other side of the house, and crouching behind the shrubbery gave herself up to miserable doubts and fears.

Suddenly a stirring in the bushes below caused her to start in terror. But Betty's instincts were brave. Before she called for help she would try to learn if help were needed. She crept to the edge of the veranda and peered into the darkness. A silvery young moon came out from behind a cloud just then and aided her. By its gleam Betty saw a slim boyish figure in the king's colors hiding in the shelter of a rosebush. "Adrian!" A great hope rose in Betty's sweet voice. "All 's safe, dear. Is it really you?"

"Now," thought Jane, planning to disguise her voice, "may her excitement and my need help me." "Not Adrian, but a friend of Adrian," she huskily and thickly replied.

"Is—is he dead?"

"No."

"Is—is he safe?"

"That he is, and in good hands."

"Oh, thank you! thank you! Come up and let my father and mother tell you how grateful we are for the danger you have run in order to soothe our fears. They will do anything for you—anything."

Jane, even in her anxiety and hurry, could but smile at this. Yet her heart sank with a sickening disgust at the necessity of the case. Betty's unconscious trust, her great love for her brother, were very touching.

"That I dare not do, Miss; but I must speak to your father."

"Father!" breathed Betty, just above a whisper. "Father, come here. There is one come who knows of Adrian!"

Mr. and Mrs. Norton were at her side before she had finished.

"Where?" cried Mr. Norton, and his voice trembled. "Bid him come up into the light. He is safe here."

Even the speaker was doubtful of that, and the hearer was more than doubtful.

"I cannot show myself," said a muffled voice, "but can you see my uniform?"

"It 's red, father. It 's all true," gasped Betty.

"Go on!" commanded Mr. Norton. "You have escaped; you bear a message?"

"Yes. I had a bad time getting by the sentinel. I have a message. Your horse—Dare Devil. Our General wants him."

"Rawdon knows his worth!" snapped Mr. Norton. "Is General Rawdon under guard?"

"He is, sir, and anxious to get away." Jane had never spoken more truly. "Had he a swift horse all would be easy. You are the General's only hope!"

"And Gad!" spluttered Mr. Norton, "no king's man calls in vain to me. Hi! Cudjo! come here, you black limb!" Cudjo appeared like a genii in a fairy tale. "See here, boy, go saddle Dare Devil. Put the best saddle on him—don't stand gaping. What if he does kick your woolly head off, it 's for the king!

Hurry, you scamp; bring Dare Devil around here. I 'll ride him myself to Rawdon. I 'll show the rebels there is one man not afraid of them."

Cudjo was gone and the messenger drew near again.

"I was told to warn your highness," Jane drawled out the title, "not to ride Dare Devil; you are too heavy. The horse has work to do later on, and besides you would be a mark for the—the enemy."

"Who, then, can ride her?" asked Mr. Norton, all flurried and puffing. "He 'd kick the—the head off of you."

"Me!" The voice from the bushes shook with real terror. "Oh! I could not ride him. It 's a good deal to ask, sir—the General wanted me to tell you that—but he said your daughter could ride the animal in safety. He promises her sure return by daylight. There is no danger to her—you may trust him! You may, indeed!"

"So I can," snorted Mr. Norton; "so I can. Bettina, will you ride for the king? Will you dare this much?"

"Yes, father."

Jane's heart smote her as she heard the tender voice and saw the sweet, fair face gleam radiant and fearless in the white moonshine.

"Ah! there 's a lass for you!" roared Mr. Norton; "she 's the stuff our kind is made of. Have no doubts, Bet. When Rawdon promises, he knows what he is about."

Jane, and even poor Betty, had misgivings on this head. But whether Rawdon could be trusted upon the present occasion or not, Jane Barton could, and she spoke for herself.

"I swear she shall return unharmed by daybreak, sir."

At this instant Cudjo came in sight, leading at arm's length a rearing, plunging black mare.

"Here de Debbil is, sah," he said, relinquishing with eagerness the bridle. "I does hope fo' de Lawd dis hoss gits reckoned wid yet! Dat I sho' does!"

Betty sprang to the back of the animal, using her father's extended hand as a help.

"And where now?" she asked the messenger.

"Down the road, straight on until you are told to halt."

Now, during the interval that Jane was struggling to be brave enough to don Adrian's clothes, she had written a note to Philip, saying that she was going to try and get Dare Devil, and that he had best be on watch near the roadside within the hour. This note she had given to Betsy to deliver, and Jane knew full well that Philip would do his part.

"Even my daughter I give to the king!" exclaimed Mr. Norton, striking an attitude and waving his hand after the departing figure. "We hold nothing back."

The slim boy in the bushes, without a word of farewell or thanks, took to his heels and ran after the now hidden black horse.

Full in the open the three near the house

saw the boy running like mad. His face was quite clearly seen for a moment as his cap fell off, but he did not pause to recover it.

"'Tain't fits!' he exploded"

"Cudjo, you laughing idiot, what's the matter with you?"

It was no wonder Mr. Norton asked this,

for the boy was acting in a most remarkable manner. Holding himself together by the band of his loose trousers, he was swaying back and forth in an agony of suppressed mirth.

"Fits!" cried Mrs. Norton; "fetch the white viper wine."

This somewhat sobered Cudjo.

" 'Tain't fits!" he exploded.

"Then what is it?" roared his master.

"Whar yo' 'spose dat comical Miss Jane dun got dem Britisher's cloes?" he gasped.

"Miss—what? Got what clothes? What ails you?"

"Dat Miss Jane! Fust I did n't know her in de red breeches; but when I see her run! Lawd! dere ain't no mistakin' Miss Jane on a run! She allers war a right smart chaser; but wid breeches—Lawd! no one ain't goin' ter take no chances when he backs Miss Jane in breeches! Whar yo' spose she's headed Miss Betty an' Dare Devil?"

An awful light was breaking through Mr. Norton's confused brain. That one moment when he had seen the messenger's face in the open! The noticeable manner of his running! Could it be Jane in disguise? If so ——

"I 've given that—that," rage choked him. He sank down upon the veranda and Cudjo was sent in hot haste for the white viper wine!

CHAPTER VI

THE ONE GREAT CAUSE

AS Betty plunged through the soft darkness her thoughts kept pace with Dare Devil's speed.

"I must be on guard as I near the Barton place," she whispered; "they may have taken General Rawdon a prisoner there, and he has probably escaped and is in hiding nearby, waiting for me. There, there, darling," this to the horse, "so, so, my pretty; softly now."

Just then, unknown to herself, Betty was passing the lusty Peter, who asked for no countersign, but muttered a curse after Dare Devil as she went thundering by. A little beyond the low, long house came in sight—Jane's home. Betty bent over the glossy

mane and petted and cooed to the nervous beast.

"Easy, my pretty! Slowly, my precious!" And Dare Devil at once became as gentle as a shorn lamb, and trotted on like an amiable plowhorse. Silence everywhere.

It was not fear of any earthly thing that stirred Betty now. She trusted the messenger. How young and brave he was! She trusted her father's wisdom in permitting her to take this night ride for the king, and she trusted in herself.

No; it was a fear unfelt before that held her now—a fear of the unknown. All the innocent years were past. The old happiness of childhood had gone with them.

Suppose the dead boys who once had played with her and Adrian should rise from their hidden places where they had fallen in battle and come back?

Betty shivered and looked to right and left, almost feeling the presence of those newly

dead playfellows, who might be homesick for the familiar scenes they had departed from. How lonely it was on the big road! Last night it was full of cries and shots and hurrying feet; to-night a holy calm rested everywhere, and only the slim, pale girl on the big black horse seemed to inhabit God's world. Yes; there was one other. Coming toward her was a man with bowed head on which rested a slouch hat. A coat much too long for him added to the oddness of his appearance. Was he friend or foe? Dare Devil seemed asking the question, too, for he stood and trembled under Betty's restraining hand.

"For the General?" asked a deep, tired voice. Betty's heart almost deafened her.

"Yes."

"Thank God! Wait, I will bring him. He is nearby. Can you dismount alone?"

"Yes." The deed was done and the girl, holding the horse's bridle, was again alone. But only for a few palpitating moments. Then

the first man reappeared, bearing upon his shoulders a comrade. Betty strained her eyes. She had seen General Rawdon at her father's house, but there was doubt if she could recognize him now.

"Miss Norton, may you never be as helpless as I am this night!"

The General knew her, then? But the voice was unfamiliar.

"Or if you are, may an Angel of Light deliver you. Can you manage your horse until I am astride? Once a-back I can feel secure on any animal."

Betty smoothed and coaxed Dare Devil, who was beginning to snort ominously.

From the shoulders of his bearer the injured man clambered to the saddle. Dare Devil reared, almost throwing Betty backward, but the new hand upon the rein had a magical effect. A master of men and beasts had taken control, and the black mare knew the power.

"God bless you, Miss Norton," said the man

from above, "you have saved the cause this night!"

"The—the—cause?" gasped Betty.

"Yes, the cause of American freedom—for the time being at least. For your sake I will lead away from an attack this night. 'T is not in me to take undue advantage, and a later time will serve me better."

He was gone and poor Betty stood by the roadside a victim of confused fears.

"Betty!" She started in terror. She had quite forgotten the rider's comrade. As she looked now, the disfiguring coat and hat lay in a heap in the dust, and there in the white light stood Philip Barton! Then all the misery of her betrayal flooded the girl's heart and mind.

"You!" she sobbed. "Oh! do not dare speak to me. You and Jane have used me for your own ends—and I hate you both!"

"Betty, stop! You will see it all differently some day. War is cruel; war is dishonest.

One must take a chance when a chance is to be had. I cannot make it clear to my heart, Betty, God knows I cannot; but each side realizes that it must take chances."

"To think of you and Jane stooping so low!" This came with a moan, for Betty was cruelly hurt.

"Betty, that horse meant everything! Marion could only lead his men in that way. He is injured; he cannot walk, and yet he is so brave."

"Marion!" Betty drew herself up. "Was that man—Marion?"

"Yes, Betty; you have set our General on the best horse in the country. You have helped him and his weary men to safety."

"Marion! Marion!" Betty kept repeating. So that was what she had done.

"Think, Betty. Had the cases been reversed, would you not have done the same. Had Rawdon lain helpless, and if that had been the only chance to save him, would you not have taken it? Speak truly, Betty."

"Call me Miss Norton, please."

"Well, then, Miss Norton," Philip had a touch of Jane's humor, "what would you have done?"

But Miss Norton refused to answer. Just then, running at full tilt down the road, came a wild disheveled figure.

"There comes—" but Betty paused. Where treason stalked so shamelessly how could she name either friend or foe? "I think there comes one who promised on his honor to take me back to my father. But he may not have honor; 't is a thing greatly lacked among the rebels, and this lad may be but a wolf in lamb's clothing."

"Did he get away?" gasped the stranger, coming up to them. "Did he? did he? Oh, why don't you speak!"

But the two were speechless. With her bare badly cropped head, Jane was a sight never to be forgotten. The short hair stood up on end; the brown face was worn and haggard; the brown eyes full of fear.

"Jane was a sight never to be forgotten"

After one look Betty instinctively shut her eyes.

"Jane Barton!" she said in horrified tones, screwing her eyes tight. "Shame to you for a bold, unmannerly maid, and a deceitful friend!"

"Oh! 't is no time for capers, Betty Norton. Philip, tell me—did Marion get away?"

"He did!"

"Then nothing matters!" Her thin face relaxed. "Oh! Bet," she almost laughed in her relief, "dear Bet, I know I look and seem a savage, but 't was our only way. Don't tell me! I know Providence created you for a patriot, whether you willed it or not. You have just lain around ready to be used since the war began. It would have been sheer madness not to take such rare material. Have you told her, Phil?" she asked, turning to her brother.

"I had not got to that yet," answered the boy; "there was so much else."

"I can go home alone." Betty tossed her head. "But how can I face my parents?"

"Keep your eyes shut," suggested Jane coolly; "and I reckon if my mother can live down the loss of my hair, your parents can survive the loss of Dare Devil. Marion will return him later on—Marion never forgets. But, dear Betty—"

"Do not 'dear' me. I wonder at you, Jane Barton. You have disgraced me in the eyes of all honest folk."

"You were never half so respectable before," sighed Jane. "Lor'! what would I not have given to have so served Francis Marion? I have given my hair—'t was my only beauty, but I would not have begrudged my head. And you, Bet, were chosen for this great thing. Once you fed the hungry; once you swung your lantern; and then you gave your fastest horse to carry our General on to victory. Lor', Betty Norton, one would think you had been specially reared to defeat your king!

Three great deeds, and two for your enemy! It is clear as day what you were destined for."

Jane was laughing hysterically and Betty at last looked at her in alarm. It was so unlike Jane to lose control. Then the next words caused Betty to forget her anger.

"Bet, try and forgive! We must work together now. Adrian is at our house—and very ill! And—and John lies beside him, and oh! they may both be dead while we stand here."

Jane put out her hand and Betty grasped it. So they ran toward their new duty. Together they entered the big guest chamber. The large bed had been removed and two cots stood in the center of the room. Upon them lay the wounded heroes.

They no longer knew rebel or Tory side. They were back in the old boyhood days before care and war had touched them. They tossed in fever, moaning, then breaking into laughter as the moods changed. Betsy hovered over them; Mrs. Barton was resting in

another room. As the old slave woman looked up and saw the two enter her anxiety over the sick boys and her shock at the sight of Jane gave vigor to her tongue.

"Fo' de Lawd!" she gasped. "Well, if yo' doan't git a spankin' fur dis caper, I doan't know! Whar 's yo' hair, yo' bad chile? An' who 's breeches has yo' got on? I clar I doan't know what 's goin' ter happen 'long o' you! An' Miss Betty, chile, come here an' see yer brudder. Ain't he a sight?"

He certainly was. Betty looked, then sank beside the cot, weeping softly. She had never seen severe illness before, and to her the wild eyes and haggard face meant only one thing—death!

He to die! Brave young Adrian. Why, he had not yet begun to live. Oh! war was cruel, no matter which side you were on.

All hatred and enmity died out at that moment. Only love must rule in that room. Royalist and Loyalist must join strength and

do battle with the Grim Presence who bided at the door. Mr. and Mrs. Norton came. They found Adrian too ill to move, so with generous hospitality Mrs. Barton took them all in, and with equal generosity they all accepted. It meant quite as much on one side as on the other.

And afar off, Marion, mounted upon Dare Devil, drove his enemies before him. Gain and loss on both lines were reported; but victory crowned the Southern colonies in the end. Then one fine morning Cudjo found Dare Devil in her own stall, looking and acting as a mare should who had traveled far, kept good company and benefited by wide experience.

"Fo' de Lawd!" muttered Cudjo, and he almost had a fit. Then cautiously he touched the black flank to see if his eyes had deceived him. Not a kick kicked Dare Devil. Marion had instilled good manners in her.

" 'Tain't yosef!" whispered Cudjo. "It certainly ain't yo'. It looks like yer, it feels like yer, but it doan't act like yer!"

Then he ran like mad down to the Barton place to tell the strange news.

Through the long, anxious days the two families had grown very close together as they watched by the narrow beds.

Jane and Betty took their turns at the weary vigils, and when the fever departed the two weak heroes told their experiences that softened many a sharp edge of prejudice.

"Is that you, Jane?" Adrian whispered one night. The dim candle at the far end of the room showed but faintly the face near the bed.

"Yes; and Betty is here, too, and Betsy is on a mattress by the door. Do you want anything?"

"No," very softly; "only I was thinking of —of that last night!"

"Please forget it, dear," pleaded Betty, kneeling by her brother.

"But there was one beautiful thing about it. I want you to know. I am afraid it will be forgotten." The poor, weak voice faltered over the broken sentences.

"When I was shot, and before Marion found me, I lay on the ground suffering dreadfully from thirst. Right beside me was Tom Waring. I used to go to school with him over Chester way, and Tom was on the other side," Adrian never said rebel side any more, "and when Tom saw me he said quite simply: 'Hello, Adrian, I 've only got a mouthful in my canteen, but you need it more than I. Besides, your mother and sister gave us food once when some of us were nearly dead, and I told your mother I would not forget. Here, drink and try to get back to them.' And I drank every drop because—well, because I did not know, and I was mad with thirst. Then they found me—Marion and Phil and the others—and I was able by that time to walk, all on account of Tom's canteen. So I got up, and then I looked at Tom," and Adrian's voice broke into a sob. "Well, Tom was n't ever going home. He lay there smiling, just as he used to lie on his bed at school—for I roomed

with him once—I never saw such a happy, contented smile. I wanted you to know, for Tom was too good to be forgotten."

Jane and Betty were crying softly. They feared to awaken John, but the tender story touched both hearts.

Adrian and John recovered. With such care and attention as was lavished upon them it would have been sheer ingratitude had they done less.

Then came the news to the quiet hamlet that American freedom had been proclaimed, and upon that day Jane and Betty took reckoning together and balanced accounts.

They were sitting among the roses alone, and their young hearts were full of joy and gratitude.

"I think even father is glad," smiled Betty, "and mother wept for joy."

"Just think!" cried Jane, flinging her strong arms wide as if to embrace all the world, "think of all the room and freedom to stretch and

grow in! Oh! I tell you, Bet, the colonies are made ready for great doings. Is n't the air sweeter to-day, Bet?"

"An Unintentional Patriot"

Betty nodded.

"And was one side worse than the other?"

Betty shook her head. She was thinking of Tom Waring.

"And, Bettina Norton, are you not glad I made you a patriot in spite of yourself?"

Betty smiled absently.

"Would n't you have felt a right mean little sneak to-day if I had not given you a show to be used?"

"You are not very humble, Jane Barton." Betty looked primly at the eager, brown face.

"No," laughed Jane. "I am an American!"

"Well," sighed Betty, "I was an Unintentional Patriot; but since I was given the name, I might as well have the game I suppose. So here 's to America, Jane Barton, and to us—Americans!"

The End.

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